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## WASHINGTON NEWS AND GOSSIP.

**Judicial Reform in the District of Columbia.**—The clause in the bill that contained a provision giving to the United States the right to sue out writs of error in criminal cases, to which we referred on Friday last, we find was stricken out ere it passed the House. Thus, what struck us as the main reasonable objection to it, was obviated. The editors of the *Intelligencer*, in their article of Saturday last, seem to complain not that the bill goes too far, but that it does not go far enough. They also state that the vote taken in 1850 was not calculated to elicit a full and intelligent expression of the views of the citizens of this District on this question. To this we reply, that there is no reason for supposing that if the expression of opinion had been more full, the result would have been different. The presumption is, that if the investigation had been carried further, the proportion would have been the same. At least it devolves upon those who maintain the contrary to produce some proofs to sustain their position.

But their other, and obviously their only substantial objection to the specific measure now proposed, goes to its supposed inadequacy to remedy the most flagrant defect in our whole judiciary system; namely its *expensiveness*. They say:

"As far as we are informed it leaves untouched a great evil of the system, and that is the enormous tax imposed on the community in the shape of judicial expenses."

"It is true, it is a grievous fault."

But, as we remarked on Friday last, it is evident that the editors of the *Intelligencer* had not read the bill. Any one, on looking into the provisions of the bill, will find that so far as suitors are concerned (although very little is said about dollars and cents) it introduces improvements into the system of procedure which will not only do away with the uncertainty and delay which belong to the existing system, but will also result in a vast saving of expense. Moreover, there are some provisions of this nature which will come more properly in the Code which the bill proposes. But besides all this, the bill itself contains specific and very valuable improvements in this particular; for instance, the clause which fixes one dollar as the cost of a certified copy of the record in all cases of a writ of error from the proposed court of appeals, instead of the three or four hundred dollars which an appellant is now often obliged to pay, although the amount involved may be barely sufficient to give a right of appeal.

So much as to the expense incurred by litigants in our courts. So far as concerns the government, a large proportion of the speech of the honorable member who reported the bill, the most cogent part of his argument is devoted to an exposition of the enormous drain made upon the national treasury by the existing judicial institutions of this District; a mass of facts and figures being adduced, which are absolutely overwhelming. In another place he says: "There are too many courts. There are too many judges. The whole system is too expensive." And all who know aught of the judicial history of the District, will agree with him fully in his commentary upon the section which establishes a criminal court, wherein he says:

"We believe that if this plan is adopted a great expense in this court will be saved to the Government, and that twenty cases will be disposed of where one is now, and it will mitigate that evil practice which now so often prevails, by which innocent and friendless persons are too often prosecuted purely through malice, and being thrown into prison, are kept there for a suffering season awaiting trial."

Again, the eighteenth section of the bill (section seventeen it ought to be) provides: "That it shall be the duty of the said judges, as soon as may be convenient after their appointment to office, to meet together to revise and improve the rules of practice and proceedings in all of said courts, and to establish such new rules as may be necessary, and also to revise and reduce the tariff of fees and costs of litigation, and other fees, costs, and charges in the offices of the clerks of said courts, as now allowed and existing, and to establish a new tariff thereof for the clerks, marshals, and cornerers of said District, and when so established, to make publication thereof, and to cause a printed copy of such rules and tariff to be always kept and exhibited in some conspicuous place in each of the offices of the clerks of said courts and of said marshals."

Upon this section, we would only remark that there is not a word of it which does not reform some crying evil, or correct some enormous abuse.

**From Madrid.**—Advices received at this point by the last steamer lead statesmen to believe that Madoz and Oleaso, the persons named by Espartaco to head the new Spanish Government, have by this time been called on by the Queen to form a new Cabinet. Madoz, who is, perhaps, the leading man of the Cortez, is the advocate for sweeping (liberalizing) changes in the government of Cuba, and is accused by more or less of his bitterest enemies with being a friend to the policy of selling the island to the United States.

By the by, it seems to be understood here that Mr. Soule's reception on his return to Madrid was as pleasant and cordial as he could have wished, though we apprehend that up to this moment our Government has received nothing whatever from him on the subject.

**The Government and Selden, Withers & Co.**—A correspondent ("E. F.") of the *New York Mirror* essays to create the impression that the Government is to be a heavy loser by the failure of Selden, Withers & Co., through the transactions of Messrs. Forney, Allen, and other unmentioned Government officers, with them. Now, we set at rest the Forney portion of this roorback last Friday.

The Patent Office is constantly in the receipt by mail of sums of \$30, for applications for patents. This money comes from all quarters of the country in local bank bills, and cannot be deposited in the Treasury of the United States without first being discounted heavily, into specie. So, up to the failing of this banking house, it has for many years been deposited in their bank, being drawn out at times, as required. When they failed, the Patent Office had some \$7,000 on deposit in that way with them. The Government is regarded, here, as a preferred creditor, in law. If so, not a dollar of this \$7,000 can be thus lost. If not, the Government cannot possibly lose beyond that sum; as the above cover each and every transaction with them by any parties whatever on Government account. These statements may be relied on.

**The Austrian Alliance.**—It will be recollected that more than a fortnight ago, we published a letter from Paris detailing the political proceedings of Palmerston in the French Chamber, the substance of what passed in his conferences with the Emperor, &c., in which it was predicted that the result of his plans would be to force Austria speedily to take

some sort of ground with the allies. Now the last news we are reminded is but a literal confirmation of the events foreshadowed in the letter in question.

**Redemption of United States Stocks.**—Up to noon, to-day, about \$350,000 of Government stocks had been received at the Treasury, for redemption, in the course of the current week, commencing on Monday morning last. The time in which they will be received ends, it will be recollected, on the 31st inst.

**An Army Officer Resigned.**—Lieut. Abbott, of the fifth infantry, U. S. A., has tendered his resignation to the Secretary of War, we hear.

**The Current Operations of the Treasury Department.**—On yesterday, the 26th of Dec, there were of Treasury Warrants entered on the books of the Department—

For the redemption of stock.....	\$201,875 15
For the Treasury debt.....	102,495 83
For the Customs.....	44,810 83
For covering into the Treasury from miscellaneous sources.....	3,831 00
Covered into the Treasury from Customs.....	1,312,797 21
Covered into the Treasury from Lands.....	382,628 70
For the War Department.....	141,352 96
For repaying in the War Department.....	932 87
For the Navy Department.....	49,000 00
For the Interior Department.....	9,550 14

## CONGRESSIONAL.

In the House, yesterday, after we went to press, on motion of Mr. Bridges the Judiciary Committee were instructed to inquire into and report upon the expediency of establishing a naval depot at New Orleans.

On motion of Mr. Letcher, the act of the territorial legislature of Minnesota, chartering the Minnesota and North Western Railroad Company was referred to the same committee, with the view of reporting "the said act null and void."

Mr. Bennett's land bill was then postponed for three weeks.

Mr. Lilly introduced a resolution, which was agreed to, instructing the Commerce Committee to inquire into the propriety of building a Custom House at Perth Amboy, N. J. Mr. Cobb reported, from the Public Lands Committee, a bill amendatory of the act of the last session, reducing and graduating the price of the public lands; postponed until Tuesday next.

The bill from the Senate providing for the contingent expenses of Nebraska territory was next passed.

The House then adjourned.

## Proceedings of To-Day.

In the Senate, to-day, the House bill to authorize the State of Massachusetts to cede to the State of New York the town of Boston Corners was passed.

The Senate bill making an appropriation for Nebraska territorial purposes having been returned from the House with an amendment, was agreed to, and as thus amended, was passed.

Mr. Fish, by leave, offered a resolution proposing to give Commodore Perry a medal for his services on the Japan expedition, which was referred ere they adjourned.

In the House, Mr. Farley reported back from the Committee on Territories, the bill for the construction of a subterranean line of telegraph from the Mississippi or Missouri to the Pacific, referred to the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union.

Mr. Harlan, of Indiana, made a personal explanation in relation to an amendment offered by him several days ago to the Indian appropriation bill, and was followed in a similar explanation by Mr. Orr.

They then went into committee, Mr. Davis, of Indiana, in the chair. Mr. Houston moved to take up the Army appropriation bill, just as our report went to press.

## BALTIMORE CORRESPONDENCE.

Baltimore, Dec. 26, 1854.

*Christmas.—The New Year.—A Doctor's Soliloquy.—The Council and the Mayor.—Brantz Mayer.—Public Works.—Weather.—Christmas, &c.*

Christmas has come and gone. Its joys and sorrows are buried with the past, and live only in remembrance.

The new year is close at hand, bringing in its train the memory of hours, days, weeks, months, and years which have rolled into the unseen abyss, and piles them mountain high to mental vision. It concentrates life past into one incomprehensible present. It makes man think of his own nothingness, and serves to teach him wholesome lessons. It is a season for good resolves—a starting point—a foundation, if you please, whereon erring humanity can, if it will, rear a beautiful structure.

The custom of celebrating New Year's Day, has too long been neglected in this city. It has usually been a day of business—one absorbing men's minds with the rougher things of life. Here, in Baltimore, the very unenviable custom prevails of dunning and presenting bills. Every street, lane and alley, swarms, on that occasion, with collectors and others, hands, pockets, hats, &c., filled with bills, which are unceremoniously thrust under the noses of unfortunate debtors, thus reminding them of their enslavement to merciless creditors, interrupting the chain of moral reflection so necessary to the commencement of a new year. Some repentant sinner may be musing to himself after this fashion: "Well, this is the beginning of a new year. God, in his infinite goodness has spared me through the past. He has overlooked my manifold transgressions. When I err, He forgives—when I deserve condemnation, He is of long suffering and slow to anger. Danger, unseen to me, was averted by His potent arm. Oh how ungrateful have I been, in not appreciating these benevolent manifestations of His superlative kindness and infinite mercy. I will, if He spares my life, henceforward resolve to do better—to mark out and practice a more approving course. The intoxicating draft shall no more pass these lips. The name of Him who created the universe shall no more be taken in vain. The rocks and quicksands in life's turbulent voyage, shall be avoided. I will learn from the past, and be wiser in the future. Life's follies and thousand transitory pleasures are but a bubble, like the meteor's flash, or like the snow-drip on the river, or a moment white, then gone for ever."

At this particular juncture of our soliloquist's reverie he is interrupted by a knock at the door. A grim, stern visage enters, presenting a bill, accompanied by a sort of nervous, equivocal interrogatory, "When can you pay this? Shall I call to-morrow, or next week? I am instructed to say it must be adjusted soon, or it will be placed in the hands of an officer, who shall ransack through every pore of your moralizing, and shall find the chain of thought on moral philosophy which had previously bound him, but he forgets the good resolves and falls back into cold misanthropy. Why not, then, let the first day in every year be free from such annoyances?

I am glad to learn that very many of our citizens have determined to suspend business during the time to the wholesome, agreeable custom of visiting, renewing acquaintances, adjusting old animosities, cementing friendships, &c. This is as it should be. The ladies are especially in its favor, and what they commend must be right, virtuous, and good. One day of sociability, set apart for such purpose, and really enjoyed, is worth a whole year of existence amid the care, turmoil, and rude chafings of business.

Our City Court has finally settled the vexed question of difference between the members of the bar, and the executive, in which an attempt was made to take the appointing power away from him, by rescinding some former resolutions to that effect. It cannot be denied that there are some "Know Nothings" in the Council—men who are justly entitled to the appellation—men whose calibre of intellect

might be placed on a needle's point. Mayor Hinks, thus far, has shown himself a man of full measure, rising far above many who attempt to control him. In the sentiment of Pollock—

"He stoops to touch their loftiest thoughts."

Brantz Mayer will unquestionably be one of the commissioners in the McDonough estate. I should regret much to see our present most excellent high constable, John Mitchell, Esq., displaced. It is to be hoped the independence and good sense of Mr. Hinks will retain him.

It is now believed that Martin, convicted some days ago of robbing the mail in our Baltimore post-office, will be set at liberty, owing to his infirmities.

I learn that the Public Works, Court House, Jail, &c., of Baltimore county, at the new county seat, are rapidly progressing.

Our city is infested at present with quite a number of passage, or house thieves, who are committing their depredations nightly by robbing persons of hats, cloaks, overcoats, &c., which are left carelessly in passages. A word of warning in time may be serviceable here and elsewhere.